

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KITUI



FROM THE BISHOP'S DESK

To all Christians of Kitui through the Parish Priests

My dear Christians,

“All nations on earth will come and adore you Lord!” Ps 86, 9

“And going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary , and falling to their knees they did him homage” Mt, 2,11

We have just celebrated this most wonderful day of Christmas, the time when Jesus our Saviour is born and when we welcome him *again* into our lives, into our homes and into our Church. The Church in her liturgy asks us to prepare very well this moment, as she also asks us to prepare every moment Jesus comes to us. In Christmas, as we look at that poor baby in the manger, it is Jesus who tells us that he wishes to be born in our lives.

My dear Christians, my daughters and sons, I wish that we reflect about this invitation to welcome Jesus and treat him always very well, in our lives, and especially in the Eucharist where he is also lying helplessly as in the manger.

On the 15th January 2012, we will start using a new translation of the English missal throughout the country. It is true that the English mass is normally celebrated in our daily masses, in the convents and in the schools, since holy Mass is normally celebrated in our churches in Kikamba or Kiswahili. But this is a good opportunity for us to improve in how we really welcome and treat Jesus in the Mass and in the Eucharist. This is an opportunity for us to show and deepen our faith that the Mass is Jesus the Emmanuel who comes to be with us. And we have to give him all the respect and glory, and honor that he deserves as our King and God.

“All nations on earth will come and adore you Lord.”

I have therefore wished to share in this letter some reflections on the liturgy, and also to give some indications that will help us all, give more honor, respect, and glory to our God in our worship.

My dear people, we have the great privilege that Jesus in fact comes to us as Emmanuel, every time Holy Mass is celebrated, and **"stays with us"** in the tabernacle, as our Bethany. If we really believe this, we should make efforts to go and visit him in the tabernacles, and speak to him asking him for our needs. We should also make an effort to go and adore him during the benedictions that are now been organized in our parishes.

“And going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage”

Today we face many challenges in our society, just like the time of the birth of Jesus, when we at times live as if God did not exist. The society and some leaders want Him to be out of our society, out of our actions, or out of our political choices.

Even today, **"There was no room for him in the inn"**. At times in our society, we only find him hidden away, pushed away into a "cave". We seem not to find him in our heart or our lives, even as Christians, nor in the lives and hearts of many of our leaders, but rather somewhere far away where we only want to mention him once in a while. No! The birth of Christ urges us to convert the world and to bring Christ back into our families and into our society. Christ calls us to be the ones who stand up to change this world and bring Christian values back to society, and to politics. To bring the Justice and Peace of God. **"Go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news"** We the ordinary people, are the only ones who can start fighting truly to uproot the weeds of Corruption, to eliminate the virus of the "Culture of hatred" by sowing abundantly Love, Peace, Justice, and Fairness in our lives. We are called to be apostles!

You have often heard of social justice. This means defending the less privileged, which is the same as to defend Jesus in the manger. **We must speak out as Christians and citizens. We must learn to Speak out with charity.** This is what Jesus calls us to do especially in this year when we will have our general elections. How you act, how you speak, what you stand for will show whether you defend Jesus and whether your Christianity is real! We need to bring Jesus back to change our society.

My dear Christians, I wish that we dedicate the coming year, 2012 to the youth. Let us walk with them and encourage them. Let us offer them opportunities to grow in faith and to grow humanly. Let us assist them to enjoy themselves with good things and guide them to take up initiatives that will benefit them economically.

My dear young people, remain **"Strong in Faith"**! This was the Apostle John's message to the youth. He who was called by the Lord when he was still very young: **"I am writing to you young people because you have overcome the Evil one" John 2,13.** My young people I look forward to meeting you on many occasions in 2012. Show that you have overcome the evil one!

As I said in the beginning of my letter, I wish now to give some indications about the celebration of the Mass. The Church is offering us another chance to renew our faith in the Holy Mass, and to improve our participation and understanding in our Worship as the three wise men did: **"And going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary , and falling to their knees they did him homage" Mt, 2,11**

The Holy Mass is above all the renewal of the sacrifice of the cross. We celebrate Christ who died for us and continues to die for love of us. It is a sacrifice where Jesus is the lamb of sacrifice, the **"Lamb of God"** who is killed to give us life. He gives us himself to become our food, as "Bread of Life" in communion, and comes as God hidden in the appearance (species) of bread and wine. But He is "God with us" and among us. That is why we must think more in the Holy Mass about being in His presence, and where everything must focus on Him and on the great Gift he gives us. That is why the Mass is not a place we come to be entertained, nor a place we come just because we feel nice, or to meet people, but rather a place we come to pray together, to worship together and to receive the graces from the death and

resurrection of Christ. Above all we come to receive Jesus Christ himself in His Body and His Blood.

Although I know this letter is long, I cannot end without giving some very specific indications so that we can improve our liturgy, especially in our churches, our schools and our youth masses, so that we give better and more meaningful worship to Jesus our King. I attach these indications to this letter, so that they can be easily studied, discussed and implemented for the better Glory of God.

Finally, I wish that we become more attentive to the disabled in our midst. First of all, let us care for those in our families who have deformities or mental illnesses. These are above all, the most loved children of God. Let us help them and together we can see how we can help them and their families.

Then there are those with hearing, sight and physical disabilities. I urge the Christians who know sign language to volunteer in our churches to translate for those with hearing impairment. *Practically let us put ramps in our churches to assist our disabled.* Let us also assist the blind by accompanying them and commentating on the liturgy in low voices. Let us also encourage those with mental handicaps to know Jesus in keeping with their capacity, and bring them to mass even when at times they may provide distractions. If they have capacity, let us prepare them for first Holy Communion and for confirmation. I repeat, my dear Christians, they are the beloved of the Lord, so let us take care of them as our brothers and sisters.

My dear sons and daughters, Jesus is asking a lot from each of us. He is asking that we become fully his. We must become the Apostles of Peace, and the Apostles of Love which requires Christian courage. With the help of his mother Mary, who always answered, **“I am the servant of the Lord”**, we will become **“light and salt of the world”**. **‘Do not be afraid!’**

I impart on you all, my blessing *and wishing you all a Blessed Christmas.*

Your loving shepherd,

✠ **Anthony Muheria**
Bishop of Kitui

*25th December 2011, Solemnity of the Birth of Our Lord
Christmas Day.*

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INDICATIONS ON THE LITURGY SOME GUIDELINES ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY ESPECIALLY IN THE HOLY MASS

Following my letter of 25th December 2011, I wish to give some brief indications that we will try to live in the diocese of Kitui, in order to give better respect to Jesus in the Holy Mass, and improve our participation in the liturgy of the Eucharist. I have used the various documents of the Church to draw some of these indications.

*The Church through the Second Vatican Council, in the **Sacrosanctum concilium**, several letters of Pope John Paul II, the Apostolic exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI, **“Sacrament of Charity”** and the **“General Instruction of the Roman Missal and other documents”** encourages us towards a more reverent celebration of the Holy Mass. Our better **“Active Participation”**, refers above all to our spiritual participation and our awareness as people of God assembled to worship, to praise, to glorify and to receive Gods graces. Everything we do then must assist us to hear and speak to Christ, that is to pray. That is why we are now encouraged to observe certain moments of silence and also to learn better what is happening at each moment of the Holy Mass.*

Here I am giving some brief guidelines on some aspects. This is not an exhaustive list of indications, but first guide that will later be followed by others with time. I wish that the priests assist in explaining and accompanying all the faithful, especially our young people in the PMC and in the schools so that we can slowly improve the way we live the Mass.

1. These indications regarding the liturgy, are especially for the faithful with the aim of highlighting and cherishing the sacredness of the liturgy, by maintaining great respect throughout the Mass.
2. How we behave, how we speak or act, and how we even dress should show this respect to Our God, *therefore we should* be always respectful.
3. That is why we should make an effort not to talk unnecessarily during the mass, or to cheer, or climb over chairs.
4. We should all make an effort to answer loudly the responses in the Mass. *We should therefore* make an effort to learn them. We should also try to sing together with the choir and our brothers and sisters in the assembly.

5. I encourage all to prepare very well *for* the Holy Mass by arriving a bit before the Mass starts.
6. I also encourage the servers and the choir *to* do rehearsals for all major liturgies including Sundays.
7. The readers should prepare the readings by reading the texts before the Mass, and rehearse them very well. There is no need to greet the people before the readings. Readers should make an effort to read well and clearly by practicing how to read, so that everyone can hear and understand the readings.
8. These preparations will help all Christians to benefit more from the celebrations and participate better.
9. Bread and Wine should always be included in the offertory gifts. We can also bring other offerings, *from* our generosity, which go to assist the needy and also *help* the upkeep for our priests.
10. The choirs should prepare the songs with the season and the readings of the day in mind. The songs should help us all to live the parts of the mass better. The choir should avoid drawing attention to themselves *and* rather lead the assembly to Christ and to the theme of the celebration. They should especially choose very fitting songs for communion time that help the faithful to pray as they receive the Lord. It is always preferable to sing songs that the Christians know.
11. Whenever possible we should try to observe the times we kneel. We do so especially during consecration and after the Lamb of God.
12. We stand at the beginning of the Mass, *then* we sit for the readings. We stand again for the Gospel at the time of the acclamation. We sit during the homily and stand for the creed. We may remain standing at the time the word of God is brought before the readings. We also stand at the time after the offertory when the priest says, “**Pray brethren...**”
13. We will also make an effort to observe moments of silence, as we have been doing, especially immediately after communion.
14. At the time of the sign of peace, we observe respect and avoid commotion. We are invited to give others, not ourselves. We should therefore avoid the clap before greeting others. We give the sign of peace with dignity to those close to us. It is not a time to greet everyone or to greet our friends. We should normally greet those who are near to us. The song sung should be brief.
15. At communion, all the faithful should receive communion with great reverence and respect. The Church has always maintained and has encouraged communion on the tongue. Communion on the hand is also allowed. The faithful therefore may receive communion kneeling or standing, on the tongue or on the hand, but always with the due respect.
16. The thanksgiving song may be sang after the post communion prayer and not during communion time, leaving only communion songs and Eucharistic songs during communion and immediately after the communion. A moment of silence should follow communion. Prayers after communion are encouraged.
17. As regards Liturgical dancing, we must take care that the liturgical dancing is always graceful, contained and decent, meaningful and cultural, avoiding all secular dancing styles or pop presentations that are aimed at entertainment or any exhibitionism. We should avoid overly vigorous dances which normally

- do not meet this criterion. The focus is not the dance but the meaning of the song, sang to Our Lord.
18. It is up to the teachers and the patrons (of youth and PMC) to oversee and emphasize that the aim is not entertainment but glorifying God. We praise Jesus our King with our gestures and body and not to entertain ourselves or for our fun. They should also monitor the dances before any liturgy.
 19. That is why the youth must assess themselves and ask for advice on the way they dance. What is the reason of this dance? Which is the source of this dance? It is meant to be cultural and not copying the other churches, and less still the pop dances on TV or aimed at impressing others.
 20. Some further indications on liturgical dancing:
 - a. The liturgical processional dancers may lead the processions at the entrance, always allowing enough space for the procession. They are escorting Christ who is in the person of priest, so they should pay attention to him.
 - b. They may participate in the Gloria.
 - c. However we will not encourage liturgical dancing in the Sanctus, the Our Father, or Lamb of God. Dancing *is* both a part of processions and a bodily expression of praise. It therefore applies only to the sections of praise in the Mass, and the processions.
 - d. The processional dancers, could also lead the procession of offertory, but **recede immediately** after the procession. They should not remain during the offertory itself. This will help the faithful focus on the offertory going on the altar.
 - e. No liturgical dances *should take place* during Lent and Advent, except on solemnities occurring in these periods.
 21. We should give special consideration and attention to the disabled in our congregation. I encourage all those proficient in the sign language to volunteer to translate for those with hearing impairment. Let us also assist the blind by accompanying them and commentating on the liturgy in low voices. Let us also encourage those with mental handicaps to know Jesus in keeping with their capacity, and bring them to mass even when at times they may provide distractions.

In conclusion, I wish to remind you all that the Mass is not an activity we have. It is primarily an encounter with someone, Jesus Christ himself. In the Eucharistic celebration, we are focused on Jesus Christ, and He is the one who calls us to His banquet. That is why this truth must be evident and why we must make more effort to express this faith we have in the Eucharist, That Jesus is truly there.

May our Eucharistic celebrations give our Lord more Joy, and give us more joy and graces, as we honour and worship our Lord.

✠ **Anthony Muheria**
Bishop of Kitui

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